

Message Text

SECRET

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45

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 OMB-01 SAJ-01 ACDA-05

OPR-01 SY-04 IO-10 SR-02 ORM-01 /079 W

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O P 201220Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8995

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

S E C R E T PHNOMN PENH 1202

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, CB

SUBJECT: NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH DAYS OF KC DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE

REF: PHNOM PENH 1051

1. SUMMARY. THE KC STEPPED UP THEIR ROCKET ATTACKS AGAINST PHNOM PENH OVER THE WEEKEND, AND CASUALTY LEVELS REFLECTED THIS. ONE ROCKET DESTROYED A COMMERCIAL PLANE AT POCHENTONG AIRFIELD AND ANOTHER HIT IN THE GROUNDS OF A PROMINENT FRENCH HIGH SCHOOL IN THE CAPITAL. THE KC ARE ALSO REPORTED TO HAVE BURNED AT LEAST ONE AND POSSIBLY MORE REFUGEE CAMPS NORTH OF PHNOM PENH. SEVERAL IMPORTANT FRIENDLY POSITIONS ALONG THE LOWER MEKONG HAVE BEEN RE-CAPTURED. END SUMMARY.

2. WE ESTIMATE THAT ABOUT 25 ROCKETS WERE FIRED AT POCHENTONG AIRFIELD AND PHNOM PENH JANUARY 19-20, KILLING 25 AND WOUNDING 58. THESE FIGURES ARE APPROXIMATE AND SOME PRESS STORIES ARE CARRYING HIGHER TOTALS. REPORTS THAT ONE OF THE ROCKETS WAS NOT THE USUAL 107MM BUT A
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122MM ARE BEING CHECKED. ONE OF THE ROCKETS FIRED

AT POCHENTONG LANDED IN THE CIVILIAN TERMINAL AREA, DESTROYING AN AIR CAMBODGE DC-3. ONE OF THE ROCKETS FIRED AT PHNOM PENH LANDED IN THE CENTRAL MARKET. ANOTHER HIT THE CORNER OF THE WELL-KNOWN FRENCH LYCEE DESCARTES IN THE EARLY MORNING OF JANUARY 20. NO BODY WAS HURT IN THIS LATTER ATTACK. FRENCH AUTHORITIES HAVE REPORTEDLY SUSPENDED CLASSES. COMMENT: ALMOST EXACTLY ONE YEAR AGO, THE SAME SCHOOL WAS HIT BY A ROCKET SHORTLY BEFORE CLASSES WERE SCHEDULED TO BEGIN FOR THE DAY. THIS CAUSED A CONSIDERABLE SHOCK, THE SCHOOL WAS CLOSED AND A LARGE PART OF THE FRENCH COMMUNITY LEFT PHNOM PENH (LATER TO RETURN). THIS HAD A SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE EFFECT ON KHMER MORALE BECAUSE THE KHMER FELT THEY WERE BEING ABANDONED. IT IS TOO EARLY TO JUDGE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THIS LATEST ROCKETING. WE WILL BE FOLLOWING THIS CLOSELY. END COMMENT.

3. EARLY JAN. 20 THE KC ARE REPORTED TO HAVE BURNED AT LEAST ONE AND POSSIBLY THREE REFUGEE CAMPS NOT FAR NORTH OF PHNOM PENH. INITIAL AND UNCONFIRMED INFORMATION INDICATES THAT SOME 300 PEOPLE HAVE FLED THE IMMEDIATE AREA AND THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF OTHERS CLOSER TO PHNOM PENH ARE SEEKING REFUGE IN THE CITY. THE KC REPORTEDLY KILLED TEN REFUGEES, AND WOUNDED FIVE OTHERS.

4. FRIENDLY AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS HAVE SUCCEEDED IN RETAKING SEVERAL IMPORTANT FRIENDLY POSITIONS ALONG THE LOWER MEKONG WHICH HAD BEEN LOST TO THE KC EARLIER IN THE OFFENSIVE. THE OPERATIONS, COMBINING KHMER NAVY AND ARMY FORCES, ALSO BENEFITED FROM HEAVY AIR SUPPORT. ABOUT 200 TACTICAL SORTIES OF VARIOUS KINDS WERE FLOWN, A VERY HIGH TOTAL FOR ONE DAY.

5. ROUTE 6 BETWEEN SIEM REAP AND THE THAI BORDER IN NORTHWESTERN CAMBODIA REMAINS CUT, AND THE SITUATION MAY BE DETERIORATING IN THAT AREA. THE KC HAVE ALSO CUT ROUTE 5 SOUTHEAST OF BATTAMBANG, AND ARE APPLYING PRESSURE AT AT LEAST ONE OTHER POINT

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ALONG THIS CRUCIAL ROAD.

6. LATE REPORT INDICATES SIX MORE ROCKETS ON THE PHNOM PENH AIRPORT. AS OF 1900 HOURS, WE DO NOT YET HAVE CASUALTY OR DAMAGE REPORT.

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